

COUNTRY REPORT: NORWAY

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The Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden) have undergone substantial cultural and social changes due to increased migration from the 1970s onwards. While the Nordic region has become more multicultural in terms of demography, workforces and cultural practices, criticism of multicultural politics has increased. Despite different patterns of immigration in the Nordic countries, they all seem to share growing political tensions with regard to multiculturalism and migration. Many migrants have experiences of racism and discrimination (Eide & Nikunen, 2010:1). In all Nordic countries, right-wing conservative parties have strengthened their position. It is against this background the present report is written. The report aims at providing the reader with an overview of the rights and situation of refugees and asylum seekers in Norway with a specific focus on children and educational integration. It suggests examples of best practices in education for newly arrived children as well as refugee and asylum seeking children in Norwegian schools. The report also includes best practices that have been considered promising due to their innovation and focus on empowerment of RASC, even if their main focus is not on education. Finally, this country report highlights key areas as urgently requiring closer inspection and improvement with regard to RASC and education.

1. METHODOLOGICAL INTRODUCTION

This report mainly relies on desk research, primarily reports from governmental institutions in Norway such as the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (Utlendingsdirektoratet), the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (Utdanningsdirektoratet),

and Statistics Norway (Statistisk Sentralbyrå). All of these authorities regularly publish statistics, reports and other types of information on their websites. Other sources are reports from the EU and OECD, but also from NGOs such as Save the Children Norway and the Norwegian Red Cross. In addition, the report is based on academic research and publications within the field of asylum-seeking and refugee children. Relatively extensive research has been conducted in Norway on migration and refugee issues in the past few years. Considerable attention has also been paid to the living conditions of asylum-seeking children.¹

Material for the report has also been obtained through e-mail exchanges or telephone interviews with key persons who were selected through our networks (personal contacts with relevant research departments in the Scandinavian countries) and other experts in the process of reviewing documents. The main role of these contacts has been to guide us in our selection of relevant documents for the review of RASC in Norway, but also in our selection of best practices and our final suggestions of areas in need of change and policy recommendations.

2. REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS: GENERAL BACKGROUND

2.1. Migration statistics

On 01.01.2011 the total population of Norway was 4,920,300. There are about 500,500 immigrants and 100,400 Norwegian-born persons with immigrant parents living in Norway. Together these two groups

¹ See for instance Førde, S (2007). *Refugee children and resilience: empowerment, participation and subjective wellbeing*. Bergen: University of Bergen.; Lauritzen, C. (2007). *Barn i mottak: et pilotprosjekt om barns psykiske helse i nordnorske asylmottak*. Tromsø: Regionsenter for barn og unges psykiske helse, Region nord, Institutt for klinisk medisin, Det medisinske fakultet; Lidén, H. Seeberg m. L. & Engebretsen, A. (2011). *Medfølgende barn på asylmottak – livssituasjon, mestring og tiltak*. Oslo: ISF; Seeberg M. L. & Bagge et al., (2009). No place: Small children in Norwegian asylum seeker reception centres. *Childhood – a Global Journal of Child Research*, Vol. 16, No 2, 395-411; Sivertsen, H. B. (2007). *Barn i asylmottak – en kvalitativ studie*. Tromsø: Institutt for psykologi, Universitetet i Tromsø.

number more than 600,900 persons, amounting to 12.2 per cent of Norway's population. Norway's immigrant population consists of people from 215 different countries and independent regions. They have come to Norway as refugees, as labour migrants, to study, or to join family already living in the country. Immigrants and Norwegian-born persons with immigrant parents live in all Norwegian municipalities, but Oslo has the largest proportion, with 28.4 per cent, or 170,200 people. The largest immigrant groups are people coming from Poland, Sweden, Pakistan and Iraq.²

In 2010 the population grew due to high immigration and the net migration from abroad increased by 9.6 per cent. The increase is mostly due to the large number of labour migrants. The largest surplus consists of citizens from Poland, Lithuania and Sweden. The highest population growth took place in Oslo.² The level of immigration in Norway is lower than in Sweden, but higher than in Finland. The proportion of immigrants is almost the same in Norway and Denmark.³

In Table 1 we can see the largest groups of foreign-born residents in Norway at 1st January 2010 and 2011. As we can see from the table, residents coming from Poland form the largest group, followed by people from Sweden, Pakistan, Iraq and Somalia.

One result of high immigration to Norway in recent years has been that a larger proportion of immigrants have been in the country for less time. At the beginning of 2011, about 41 per cent had lived in Norway less than five years. Among the largest immigrant groups, immigrants from Poland and Lithuania have the shortest stays, with eight out of ten having resided in Norway for fewer than five years. Six out of ten immigrants from Denmark, Pakistan and Vietnam have been resident in Norway for 20 years or more.⁵

2.2. Asylum

Table 2 below shows the number of asylum applicants in the Nordic countries in 2010. Sweden stands out from the other countries (Denmark, Finland and Norway) with considerably more applicants. In comparison with Denmark and Finland, which have a similar population size, Norway has quite a large number of asylum applicants. Most of the asylum applicants in Norway come from Eritrea and Somalia, and asylum seekers from Serbia are not among the top five, compared to the other Nordic countries.

Table 3 illustrates the development during the period 1990 – 2009 in Denmark, Norway and Sweden in

Table 1. The largest groups of foreign-born residents in Norway⁴

Country of origin	2010	2011	Country of origin	2010	2011
Poland	52,125	60,610	Iran	16,321	16,957
Sweden	31,193	34,108	Turkey	15,998	16,430
Pakistan	31,061	31,884	Lithuania	10,341	16,309
Iraq	26,374	27,827	Bosnia and Herzegovina	15,918	16,125
Somalia	25,496	27,523	Russia	14,873	15,879
Germany	22,859	24,394	Philippines	13,447	14,797
Vietnam	20,100	20,452	Sri Lanka	13,772	14,017
Denmark	19,298	19,522			

² www.ssb.no/innvandring_en/ 03.05.2011.

³ <http://www.norden.org/en/the-nordic-region/population> 03.05.011.

⁴ www.ssb.no/innvbef_en/tab-2011-04-28-01-en.html 03.05.2011.

⁵ Kvarv Andreassen, K., Tea Dzamarija, M., (2011). Population. In K. Henriksen, L. Østby D. Ellingsen (eds.) *Immigration and Immigrants 2010*. Statistical Analyses (SA 122). Oslo: Statistics Norway. Available at http://www.ssb.no/english/subjects/02/sa_innvand_en/.

Table 2. Five main citizenships of asylum applicants in the Nordic countries in 2010⁶

Denmark		Finland		Norway		Sweden	
Afghanistan	1,465	Somalia	520	Eritrea	1,710	Serbia	6,255
Syria	815	Iraq	515	Somalia	1,395	Somalia	5,630
Iran	655	Russia	395	Afghanistan	980	Afghanistan	2,400
Russia	400	Afghanistan	240	Russia	630	Iraq	1,995
Serbia	265	Serbia	155	Ethiopia	505	Kosovo	1,715
Other	1,470	Other	1,265	Other	4,805	Other	13,880
Total	5,070		3,090		10,025		31,875

Table 3. Asylum requests and granted asylum from 1990 – 2009 in Denmark, Norway and Sweden⁷

Persons requesting asylum	Norway	Sweden	Denmark
1990	-	29,420	5,292
2000	10,843	16,303	10,347
2005	5,402	17,530	1,283
2008	14,431	24,353	951
2009	17,226	24,194	2,022
Persons granted asylum			
1990	-	-	-
2000	-	7,221	5,156
2005	-	5,358	1,147
2008	3,051	8,276	1,453
2009	4,508	8,727	1,376

terms of asylum requests as compared to granted asylum status. However, it is important to note that the year when one applies for asylum need not be the same year when one's application is granted or denied. The general pattern is that most applications are refused in all countries.⁷ The most restrictive policy is to be found in Denmark, where grants have been reduced considerably between 2000 and 2005. See Danish country report for further information.

In Table 4 we can see the country of origin of persons coming to Norway to seek asylum during the period 2000 to 2009. As expected, the figures change depending on the circumstances in each country during different

periods. Conflicts during different periods of time are shown in the table below. The ongoing conflicts in Afghanistan, Somalia, Eritrea and Iraq have resulted in a large number of asylum seekers from these countries.

2.2.1. Asylum seeking procedure

The police are responsible for registering asylum seekers. It is also the police who investigate whether the asylum seeker's stated identity is correct. In addition,

⁶ Eurostat, Population and social conditions, 5/2011.

⁷ Nordic Statistical Yearbook 2010 (Main suppliers of data: The Nordic national statistical institutes). Copenhagen: Nordic Council of Ministers, Copenhagen.

Table 4. Asylum applications, main countries of origin, 2001 – 2010⁸

Country of origin	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Afghanistan	603	786	2,032	1,059	466	224	234	1,363	3,871	979
Eritrea	132	269	198	110	177	316	789	1,799	2,667	1,711
Ethiopia	173	325	287	148	100	143	241	354	706	505
Iran	412	450	608	393	279	218	222	720	574	429
Iraq	1,056	1,624	938	413	671	1,002	1,227	3,137	1,214	460
Nigeria	27	139	235	205	94	54	108	436	582	354
Russia	1,318	1,719	1,893	938	545	548	863	1,078	867	628
Serbia*	928	2,460	2,180	860	468	369	585	363	115	200
Somalia	1,080	1,534	1,601	957	667	632	187	1,293	1,901	1,397
Stateless	194	391	366	298	209	237	515	940	1,280	448
Other	8,859	7,783	5,275	2,569	1,726	1,577	1,557	2,948	3,449	2,953
Total	14,782	17,480	15,613	7,950	5,402	5,320	6,528	14,431	17,226	10,064

* From 2001 to 2007, Montenegro is included. Until 2008, Kosovo is included.

the police try to find out how the asylum seeker has travelled to Norway.⁹

After registering as an asylum seeker, the person will be offered accommodation in an asylum centre.

It is the Directorate of Immigration (UDI) which is responsible for first categorizing (as ‘Dubliners’, minors, etc.) the asylum seekers and then processing the application. The UDI decides asylum cases in the first instance. The UDI has different procedures for processing applications for protection. How the application is processed and how long it takes depends on where the asylum seeker comes from and what kind of situation he/she is in:

- The 48-hour procedure
- The Dublin procedure
- The procedure for unaccompanied minor asylum seeker (see 2.2.3).
- The 3-week procedure
- The procedure for ordinary cases.¹⁰

The 48-hour procedure

If the asylum seeker arrives from a country that the UDI deems to be safe, the application will be assumed to be

without foundation. If an application falls under the 48-hour procedure, the UDI will carry out a brief interview with the applicant in order to clarify why he or she is applying for protection in Norway. The police investigate the travel route. If the UDI deems the application to be without foundation, it will be rejected within 48 hours, and the applicant will be escorted out of Norway.

The Dublin procedure

If the application is to be processed in accordance with the Dublin regulations, the asylum seeker will not be interviewed by the UDI. As soon as it has been established which country is responsible for processing the application, the asylum seeker will be escorted there.

The 3-week procedure

If the asylum seeker comes from a country with a high rate of rejection by the UDI (there is a list of these countries), the UDI will try to make a decision within

⁸ www.udi.no/arsrapport2010/ 03.05.2011.

⁹ www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/jd/Subjects/immigration/asylum-and-refugee-policy/the-procedure-in-an-asylum-case.html?id=85863 15.04.2011.

¹⁰ www.udi.no/Norwegian-Directorate-of-Immigration/Central-topics/Protection/Procedure-in-asylum-cases/What-is-the-procedure-in-asylum-cases/ 15.04.2011.

three weeks. If further investigation or verification of case information is required, case processing times may be longer.

If the asylum application qualifies for the 3-week procedure, the UDI will only conduct one extensive asylum interview.

Ordinary cases

If the application does not qualify for any of the procedures mentioned above (including the procedure for unaccompanied minors), it is an ordinary application. The UDI will carry out an extensive asylum interview with the applicant. Additional information and investigation are often necessary. The procedure frequently takes several months or longer.¹⁰

All asylum seekers, except those under the Dublin regulation, are interviewed by the UDI within a month after arrival. Normally, conversations with children will also be held. Only if the parents object, or it is clear that the interview is unnecessary, will it not be held.¹¹

Before the interview, The Norwegian Organisation for Asylum Seekers (NOAS) provides information about what it means to apply for protection. This happens within the first three days at the asylum centre.¹²

If the application is granted, there are two alternatives: The new residents can find their own place to live. If this is the case, they must have enough money to support themselves, because they will not be provided with any help in finding accommodation. However, if newcomers are dependent on financial assistance from the public authorities, the asylum reception centre and the IMDI will help them find a municipality in which they can settle. They will only receive one offer of accommodation from the IMDI and are not allowed to stay at the asylum centre any longer. They also lose their financial support.

If the application is refused by the UDI, a lawyer will be appointed to help the asylum seeker, who has the right to appeal against a refusal by the UDI. The appeal is formulated together with the lawyer. If the UDI continues to uphold its refusal despite the appeal, the case will be sent to the Immigration Appeals Board (UNE) for a final decision. The UNE is a separate body that deals with immigration appeals.

If the asylum seeker receives a final rejection of the application, she or he has to leave the country.

2.2.2. Asylum seeking children

Table 5 shows the top ten countries from which unaccompanied children (younger than 18 years)

Table 5. Country of origin for unaccompanied asylum seekers aged < 18 years, 2001 – 2010¹³

Country	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	Total
Afghanistan	41	144	306	141	46	60	86	579	1,719	376	3,498
Eritrea	25	37	24	10	7	14	37	68	144	89	455
Ethiopia	44	59	57	14	9	5	21	21	50	38	318
Iran	4	10	11	8	9	9	8	28	15	13	115
Iraq	87	190	108	30	46	92	124	364	84	35	1,160
Russia	37	21	26	17	18	28	13	33	27	17	237
Somalia	99	133	117	80	74	61	29	117	246	119	1,075
Sri Lanka	60	39	20	15	16	16	34	59	37	19	315
Other countries	152	249	229	105	86	61	48	96	160	159	1,345
Stateless	12	12	18	4	11	3	3	9	18	27	117
Total	561	894	916	424	322	349	403	1374	2500	892	8,635

¹¹ www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/jd/Subjects/immigration/asylum-and-refugee-policy/the-procedure-in-an-asylum-case.html?id=85863 15.04.2011.

¹² Noas.no 15.04.2011.

¹³ www.udi.no/arsrapport2010/ 03.05.2011.

came during the period 2002 to 2008. The main groups of unaccompanied children in 2010 came from Afghanistan and Somalia.

In 2009, the whole of Europe experienced a large increase of asylum-seeking unaccompanied minors owing to the ongoing conflicts in, for instance, Afghanistan, Somalia and Iraq. In 2010, fewer unaccompanied children came to Norway. The situation was the same in many European countries, but in Sweden the situation was the opposite. In Norway, only 890 children applied for asylum in 2010, in comparison with 2,500 the year before.

2.2.3. *Asylum procedure for unaccompanied children*

Unaccompanied children aged fifteen to eighteen years live in units for unaccompanied minors. These units are staffed around the clock. One person at the centre is the contact person for the child. One is not forced to live in these centres, but if a minor leaves without providing a new address he/she will be reported to the police and to the Child Welfare Service. If the unaccompanied child is younger than 15, the Child Welfare Service is responsible for the accommodation. The accommodation provided by them is called a care centre.¹⁴

An unaccompanied child is always appointed a guardian, to ensure that the child receives all the benefits he/she is entitled to and to promote the child's legal and financial interests.

The unaccompanied child will also be given a lawyer to assist him/her in applying for asylum. Normally, the child meets with the lawyer before the interview with the UDI. The lawyer's duty is to help the child prepare for the interview. Following the interview, it is also the lawyer who examines the interview to make sure that everything in the statement is correct. If the application for asylum is refused, the same lawyer has to help the child with his/her appeal.¹⁴

"The *Immigration Act of 2008* adds child-specific forms of persecution to the list of conditions for asylum. The new legislation also emphasizes the best interest of the child as a fundamental consideration in any assessment

for residence permits for humanitarian reasons, and sets the threshold for consenting to residence lower for children than for adults".¹⁵

Minors always have access to the healthcare system on the same terms as other minors in Norway.¹⁴

3. INSTITUTIONAL SET-UP, LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

3.1. National level

The Norwegian Parliament governs the migration legislation and determines which criteria are to apply for a person to be entitled to a residence permit in Norway. The Directorate of Immigration (UDI) is the central agency in the immigration administration in Norway. The UDI has the overall responsibility for coordination with the immigration administration. The UDI processes applications for asylum, visas, family immigration, work and study permits, citizenship, permanent residence permits (settlement permits) and travel documents. The Directorate of Immigration also makes decisions on rejection and expulsion.

These decisions can be appealed to the Immigration Appeals Board (UNE). The decision made by the UNE is final. The UDI is also responsible for ensuring that all asylum seekers are offered somewhere to live while they wait for the Directorate to process their applications.

The *Immigration Act of 2008* regulates the entry of foreign nationals into Norway and their right to residence and work. The act and the corresponding *Immigration Regulation* entered into force on 01.01.2010.

With the new act the national assembly, Stortinget, now has to decide more of the detailed provisions in the Immigration Regulation than it did before, when the government had more power. This is due to the strong political interest in immigration issues.

¹⁴ <http://www.udi.no/Norwegian-Directorate-of-Immigration/Central-topics/Protection/Asylum-seekers-and-refugees/Unaccompanied-minor-asylum-seekers/#units> 05.04.2011.

¹⁵ Vitus, K. & Lidén, H. (2010) "The Status of the Asylum seeking Child in Norway and Denmark: Comparing Discourses, Politics and Practices", in: *Journal of Refugee Studies*, vol 23, No 1, 62-81.

In the new regulation, as well as in the previous one, four main categories of immigrants from third countries are admitted following an individual assessment:

- a) Labour migrants;
- b) Persons with close family ties to someone already residing in Norway;
- c) Students and the like;
- d) Refugees or persons who qualify for a residence permit on humanitarian grounds.¹⁶

Students are only granted temporary residence permits but they are allowed to work part time. If they get a job offer upon completion of their studies, they can change their status.

The other categories may be granted either a permanent or only a temporary residence permit. Unless otherwise stated, a residence permit in Norway includes the right to work. A first-time residence permit must be granted prior to entry and will, as a rule, be granted for at least one year, although it is sometimes granted for a period of up to three years.

In the new Act, the term ‘refugee’ covers a broader group than it did previously. In addition to persons who meet the criteria of Article 1A of the *Refugee Convention of 1951*, also included are applicants covered by the non-refoulement provisions of any international convention to which Norway is a party. The *European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms* is the most important of these. This means that those who are eligible for Subsidiary Protection Status under the *EU Qualification Directive* will be granted refugee status under the Norwegian *Immigration Act*.¹⁶

The right to family reunification has been strengthened for those included in the extended refugee concept; they are exempted from the income/subsistence requirements that other groups have to meet as of 01.01.2010. The subsistence requirement now stipulates the person applying must show that they are likely to meet a certain income requirement for about a year, must also provide documentation from the latest tax assessment showing that the income requirement was satisfied during the previous year, and must show that they did not receive financial support or the equivalent from the social services in the past year.¹⁶

In 2001, Norway implemented the *Schengen Agreement* and in 2003 the rules of the *Dublin II Regulation*. With the exception of Bulgaria and Romania, EU regulations regarding the free movement of persons apply to nationals of countries party to the *Agreement on the European Economic Area (EEA)*. As part of EFTA, free movement also applies to nationals from Switzerland.¹⁶

In 2010, the Ministry of Justice and the Police presented a white paper on Norwegian refugee and migration policy from a European perspective. Norway is, and will be, influenced by policy developments in the EU, and the white paper describes the development of the EU’s collaboration on integration issues.¹⁶

3.1.1. The Ombudsman for children

In Norway, the Ombudsman for Children is appointed by the King (i.e. Cabinet) for a four-year period. The Ombudsman is selected through an open application procedure. After screening the candidates, one person is nominated and presented to the cabinet. The Ombudsman can hold office for two periods.¹⁷

Although the Ombudsman is administratively under the jurisdiction of the Ministry for Children and Family Affairs, neither the Norwegian Parliament nor the Government have the power to instruct the Ombudsman.¹⁷

The duties of the Ombudsman are to promote the interests of children (up to the age of eighteen) vis-à-vis public and private authorities and to monitor the development of conditions under which children grow up. The Ombudsman has regular contact with children and youth. There are different ways to come in contact with the Ombudsman. The most common way for children and youth is to use the Children’s Hotline on the Ombudsman’s website, ‘Straight Talk’. The questions and answers are published anonymously on the Ombudsman’s website. Another means of communication is the so-called ‘Ombudsman’s youth council’, a youth council consisting of young people from various schools in the Oslo region. When the Ombudsman travels, he or she often meets with children. Before speaking on a specific topic at an event such as a conference, he or she tries to meet local children with experience on that topic. The Ombudsman has

¹⁶ Thorud, E, Haagenen, E & Jølstad, F. O. (2010). *International Migration 2009 – 2010. SOPEMI-report for Norway*, UDI.

¹⁷ www.barneombudet.no/english 17.03.2011.

also established what are called ‘expert groups’. It is the children who are the experts, because they have particular experiences. In 2006, the expert group on violence was established and the Ombudsman and the children have met on several occasions. Moreover, a meeting between the group and the National Police Commissioner has been arranged.¹⁷

The main objectives of the Ombudsman are:

- To ensure that the Ombudsman’s office acts as a protector and spokesperson for all children;
- To contribute to an increase in activities offered to vulnerable children and youngsters;
- To ensure that there is a special focus on particular vulnerable groups of children (abused, sick, handicapped, etc.);
- To ensure that the interests of all children are protected in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.¹⁷

3.2. On a regional and local level

Norway is divided into nineteen administrative regions, called counties (*fylker*; *fylke* in the singular), and 430 municipalities (*kommune*; *kommune* in the singular).

The municipalities are key actors in facilitating integration on a local level. They are responsible for settling refugees in cooperation with IMDi. Part of their integration work is regulated by the Introduction Act. The municipalities have to ensure that refugees and their families receive instruction in the Norwegian language and social studies. The municipalities must also prepare them for the labour market. The general municipal services have to be adapted to suit a multicultural population.¹⁸

Norway has more than one hundred asylum centres run on behalf of the immigration authorities by local municipalities, non-governmental organizations or private contractors. At the end of 2010, 16,600 persons lived in 129 asylum centres in 117 different municipalities. The number of asylum centres has since decreased by forty nine.¹⁹

3.3. Examples of non-governmental institutions on national, regional and local levels

Besides well-known international organizations like ECRE (European Council on Refugees and Exiles), UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), the Red Cross, Save the Children, Amnesty International, UNICEF (the United Nations Children’s Fund) and Childwatch International, several other non-governmental institutions in Norway work with issues relating to refugee and asylum-seeking children and unaccompanied migrant children.

The Norwegian Organization for Asylum Seekers (NOAS) has as its main aim to safeguard the interests of asylum seekers in Norway. It is a membership organization, which provides legal aid or welfare assistance to persons who seek and/or have been granted asylum status and protection in Norway. Also on their agenda is the aim of combating racism and xenophobia.²⁰

As for sponsoring leisure activities for refugee and asylum-seeking children (RASC) in various reception centres in Norway, organizations like Save the Children Norway, the Norwegian Red Cross and the Church City Mission are involved. Activities like sports, excursions, arts and crafts, cultural events, and tutoring homework are offered.²¹

4. OVERVIEW OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AND THE EDUCATION STATUS OF REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

4.1. Central administrative authorities for education

The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training was established in 2004 and is responsible for the

¹⁸ IMDI (2010). *Fact booklet about immigrants and integration*. Available at <http://www.imdi.no/Documents/BrosjyrerHefterHaandbok/iFACTS2010.pdf>.

¹⁹ IMDi, *iFakta 2011*. Available at <http://www.imdi.no/no/Kunnskapsbasen/Innholdstyper/Brosjyrer/2011/iFAKTA-2010/>

²⁰ www.noas.org, 27.05.2011.

²¹ De Wal Postoor, L., Eide, K. & Mekonen, L. (2010) *Reception of asylum seeking and refugee children in the Nordic countries: The Norwegian report*. Norwegian centre for violence and traumatic stress studies. Centre for child and adolescent mental health. Available at <http://nordicrefugeechildren.se/>

development of primary and secondary education. The Directorate is the executive agency for the Ministry of Education and Research. It has a broad range of duties, ranging from curriculum planning, examinations and analyses to legislation and supervision. This means that the Directorate has the overall responsibility for supervising education and for governance of the education sector. It is also responsible for the implementation of Acts of Parliament and regulations. In addition to this, the Directorate is responsible for managing the Norwegian Support System for Special Education (Statped), state-owned schools, and the educational direction of the National Education Centres.

The Directorate is responsible for all national statistics concerning primary and secondary education. On the basis of these statistics it initiates, develops and monitors research and development. It is also responsible for coordinating many international studies.

4.2. The Norwegian education system

Education for all is a basic precept of Norwegian educational policy. Children and young people must have an equal right to education. This means that the education shall be equal regardless of where they live, their gender, social and cultural background or any special needs. In Norway, all public education is free of charge. Kindergartens charge fees to parents.²²

In Norway there also are some private schools. Under certain conditions, they can receive 85 per cent of their costs from the state. There are also a small number of private schools that do not receive any state support.²²

The Norwegian school system is divided into non-compulsory and compulsory schooling. Non-compulsory schooling includes the Kindergarten and the upper secondary school. Compulsory schooling includes primary school and lower secondary school. The children begin school the year they turn six.²²

To sum up, school is divided into the following stages:

1. Kindergarten ('Barnehage') is for children up to 6 years of age. Preschool is offered to all children in Norway.
2. Compulsory school ('Grunnskole') is for children 6-16 years of age, grades 1-10. The compulsory school is divided into primary school (grades 1-7) and lower secondary school (grades 8-10).

3. Upper Secondary School ('vidaregående opplæring'), which encompasses grades 11-13, is not compulsory; however, it is a prerequisite if a student wishes to study at university level.
4. Adult education.

In autumn 2005, the kindergartens were transferred from the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs to the Ministry of Education and Research, and in 2006 the new Ministry determined the Regulation concerning a Framework Plan for Content and Tasks for Kindergarten. It provides guidelines for fundamental values, content and tasks for kindergartens. Kindergarten is the first step in the lifelong learning process, and should be an educational institution. The Kindergarten Act governs kindergarten activities in Norway.²²

In Norway, compulsory education is divided into two main stages: primary school and lower secondary school. Compulsory primary and secondary schooling lasts for ten years.²²

In the autumn of 2006, a school reform called The Knowledge Promotion was introduced. The National Curriculum for the Knowledge Promotion (LK06) lays down the objectives and quality framework for both primary and lower secondary school.²² In addition to primary school, for grades one to four the municipalities are legally obliged to provide daycare facilities before and after school.²²

After completing lower secondary school, the student has the right to three years of upper secondary education and training. The studies lead either to admission to higher education, to a vocational qualification or to basic skills. There are three programmes for General Studies and nine Vocational Education Programmes. There is a supplementary programme for pupils who, after vocational education and training, wish to obtain the necessary qualifications for admission to university or university college.²²

4.2.1. Norwegian language training²³

Since September 2005 it has been compulsory for newly arrived adult refugees and immigrants to participate in 300 hours of lessons in Norwegian language training and social studies. If there is a need for further training,

²² Ministry of Education and Research (no date). *Education – from Kindergarten to Adult Education*.

²³ The word training is mostly used for adult education.

there are ways to receive more hours (up to 3000). The training is regulated by the Introduction Act. The right and obligation to participate applies (with some exceptions) to those between sixteen and fifty five years and to those who have been granted asylum, a residence permit on humanitarian grounds, collective protection, or a family immigration permit linked to a person in any of these groups. The training for these persons is free of charge. Participation in this language programme is a requirement for receiving Norwegian citizenship.²⁴

Since the autumn of 2007 it has been possible for asylum seekers staying in reception centres to participate in Norwegian language training. These lessons amount to a total of 250 hours and are free of charge. It is the municipalities which organize this training, but it is financed by the state.²⁵

4.3. Characteristics of RASC: An overview of the educational situation for refugees and asylum seekers

Asylum seekers aged six to sixteen are generally entitled to – and required to receive – education. This also applies to those at the initial asylum seeking stage, if they are deemed likely to stay in Norway for more than three months. This right also applies to asylum seekers aged six to sixteen years whose application has been rejected at the final stage.

If the asylum seeker is aged sixteen to eighteen years, he or she is not entitled to education, but this does not preclude the possibility of being offered it if the municipality can arrange it. This is a crucial aspect of the Norwegian regulations regarding asylum-seeking minors, which are stricter compared to EU regulations. Brekke and Vevstad (2007:76) conclude the following after analysing various European asylum regimes:

The Norwegian practice and legislation on access to schooling for asylum seeking children and adolescents is similar to the requirements of the EU Directive and the practice in the Member States. There is however one exception; the right to schooling for the age group 16-18. The access to schooling for this group is not guaranteed in Norwegian legislation.

In the *Operations Regulations* (Driftsreglementet) from the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration, the employees at the reception centres are encouraged to facilitate access to local schooling for this group. This is insufficient compared to the EU Directive. Article 2 and 10 of the Directive, which states that adolescents aged seventeen or younger are to be considered minors and therefore are entitled to special rights. The access to schooling for asylum seekers aged sixteen to eighteen is better secured in the EU Directive than in Norwegian legislation.²⁶

4.3.1. Adapted education in Norwegian, bilingual education and education in the mother tongue

Pupils in the primary and lower secondary school who have a mother tongue other than Norwegian or Sami have the right to adapted education in the Norwegian language.²⁷ The pupils take part in these classes until they are sufficiently proficient in Norwegian to follow the normal education in the school. If necessary, the pupils also have the right to mother tongue education and/or bilingual subject teaching. Mother tongue education can take place outside the pupil's ordinary school.²⁸ In autumn 2009, 3,218 pupils were receiving mother tongue education, 11,037 were receiving bilingual subject teaching and 5,897 were receiving both mother tongue education and bilingual subject teaching. The most common languages among pupils receiving this kind of education were Somali, Urdu and Arabic. If the school's ordinary teaching staff cannot provide mother tongue and bilingual subject teaching, the municipality must arrange alternative education

²⁴ <http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/bld/Topics/Integration-and-diversity/introductory-programme-and-norwegian-lan.html?id=1141>

²⁵ Thorud, E, Haagensen, E & Jølstad, F. O. (2010). *International Migration 2009 – 2010. SOPEMI-report for Norway*.

²⁶ Brekke, J and Vevstad, V. (2007) *Reception conditions for asylum seekers in Norway and the EU*. Oslo: Institutt for samfunnsforskning.

²⁷ The Education Act section 2-8 (for the 10-year compulsory school) and section 3-12 (upper secondary education and training) states that pupils whose mother tongue is other than Norwegian or Sami are entitled to special training in Norwegian until they are proficient enough in Norwegian to follow the regular school teaching. If necessary, such pupils are also entitled to mother tongue teaching, bilingual technical training, or both. It follows from the premise for special Norwegian instruction that the curriculum for basic Norwegian for language minorities is a transitional plan and shall be used only until pupils are able to follow the teaching in accordance with the regular curriculum in Norwegian. See: The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training. Curriculum for basic Norwegian for language minorities, The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training. Available at http://www.udir.no/Artikler/_Lareplaner/_english/Common-core-subjects-in-primary-and-secondary-education/ 05.05.2011.

²⁸ The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (2010). *The Education Mirror 2009. Analysis of primary and secondary education and training in Norway*. Oslo: The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training.

and training adapted to the pupil's situation. In autumn 2009, 2,289 pupils received specially adapted education. Before any adapted education is decided on, the pupil's proficiency in Norwegian is examined. If he or she has sufficient proficiency to follow normal education in the school, he or she will not receive adapted education.²⁸

In 2009 – 2010, almost seven per cent of pupils received individual decisions on adapted instructed in Norwegian. The proportion has increased since the year 2000. This is related to the fact that annual immigration has increased by 80 per cent from 2003 to 2009.²⁸

4.3.2. Differences in learning outcomes among pupils with a migrant background

In an analysis of national test results for 2007, 2008 and 2009 based on pupils' immigrant background, pupils are divided into four categories of immigrants: first-generation immigrants from non-Western countries; descendants from non-Western countries; first-generation immigrants from Western countries; and descendants from Western countries.²⁹ As can be seen from Table 6 below, the first-generation immigrants with a non-Western background score lower than average on all three national tests.

An analysis conducted by The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (2010) on primary and

secondary education and training in Norway also reveals a relationship between how long you have stayed in Norway and scores on national tests. The longer the pupil has lived in Norway, the higher the test scores. Arrival in Norway before or after the start of school is also an important factor.³¹

5. BEST PRACTICES DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

We now shift our attention to an overview of best practices in education for newly arrived children as well as refugee and asylum seeking children in Norwegian schools. In the description below, we have also included practices we consider promising due to their innovation and focus on empowerment of RASC, even if their main focus is not on education. The main stakeholders behind the practices described below are national authorities, municipalities and Save the Children Norway. The practices have been chosen based on the criteria for identification of good practices used in the INTEGRACE project and on our goal to illustrate various types of practices with different purposes. The selection is based on our own knowledge and experiences within the field, through desk research and through contacts with key stakeholders in Norway familiar with RASC. Before

Table 6. Achievement levels in English, Mathematics and reading among pupils with an immigrant background. Overall results on the national tests for Year 8 in 2007, 2008 and 2009: standardized scores²⁹

Test	Immigrants from non-Western countries ³⁰	Immigrants from Western countries	Descendants from non-Western countries	Descendants from Western countries
English	-5.9	-0.1	-1.2	4.1
Mathematics	-7.0	0.4	-2.9	2.1
Reading	-10.1	-2.9	-5.6	1.6

²⁹ Opheim, V. (2010). *Tables and figures in The Education Mirror, part 1. Analyses of national tests for Years 5 and 8 in the years 2007, 2008 and 2009. Memo to the first report from the project, "Spending and learning outcomes in primary and secondary education and training". Unpublished.*

³⁰ **Non-Western countries:** Statistics Norway distinguished between western and non-western countries in the past, but these categories were discontinued in 2009. Asia including Turkey, Africa, South and Central America and Eastern Europe previously made up the "non-western" countries. "**Western countries**" were defined as the Nordic Countries, Western Europe (excluding Turkey), North America and Oceania. Source: Statistics Norway.

³¹ The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (2010). *The Education Mirror 2009. Analysis of primary and secondary education and training in Norway.* Oslo: The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training.

looking at the chosen practices in more detail, we will turn our attention to previous research in Norway and some recommendations.

5.1. Previous research

In this section on previous research and recommendations, we turn our focus to several key studies and their results, especially with regard to RASC and educational issues. A common finding of these studies is the importance of putting RASC – i.e. their situation (in Norway, but also in the country of origin including their journey to Norway), needs (e.g. psychological, pedagogical) and expectations – on the agenda.

In their article 'The Status of the Asylum seeking Child in Norway and Denmark: Comparing Discourses, Politics and Practices', Vitus and Lidén³² examine schooling, the use of hearings in asylum cases, and the reasons for being granted humanitarian residence permits in the two countries. In the case of Norway, the authors conclude that the discourse on the need to control national borders competes with the discourse on protection of the child. In Denmark, the former discourse prevails (see the Danish country report). Asylum seeking children in Norway are positioned not only as asylum seekers but also as any other child, who has the right to normal schooling, to be listened to in the asylum procedure, and in some cases to humanitarian residence permits due to their attachment to Norway. Nevertheless, previous research has shown that this aim may be easier to write in documents than to implement in practice, especially as regards adapting education to the special needs of RASC.

The contribution of Marko Valenta³³ is of great significance, as he specifically examines the type of education provided to child asylum seekers in Norway and his data are quite recent. In addition, while much of the research in Norway has focused on minority pupils and their schooling, for example school results, little attention has, so far, been paid to the situation of RASC. His main concern is the integration of child asylum seekers into the Norwegian primary school

system. In his report, Valenta poses two research questions: Do asylum-seeking pupils receive the same quantity of education as Norwegian pupils? What are the weaknesses in the current tuition provided to child asylum seekers? The study is based on a survey covering twenty nine schools and thirty reception centres for asylum seekers in Norway. Furthermore, thirty informants were interviewed (e.g. teachers, representatives of local, regional and central school authorities, as well as the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration). Valenta concludes that while child asylum seekers get the same amount of education as their Norwegian peers and are enrolled in primary school shortly after their arrival in ordinary reception centres, they do not get enough adapted education based on the special needs of asylum-seeking pupils. According to Valenta, the main reason for this is the lack of optimal mother-tongue tuition and bilingual tuition.

A major issue in the public debate and in research is whether asylum-seeking children should be placed in introduction classes in order to learn Norwegian before attending an ordinary class. The research points to different experiences. On the one hand, not knowing Norwegian may cause RASC to feel excluded both linguistically and socially; but on the other hand, studies show that when RASC attend an introduction class, learning Norwegian is the priority and other school subjects receive much less attention. With the latter model, the children may run the risk of again being excluded by not getting to know their Norwegian peers.³⁴ One solution to this problem may be to give RASC parts of the ordinary instruction in their own language, thus providing a bilingual school context³⁵ – a suggestion also put forward by Valenta.³⁶

Research conducted by Eide³⁷ on unaccompanied refugee children follows the same line of thought as discussed above, stressing that the educational system must take into consideration RASC's special needs and situation. In Eide's recommendations, it is also stated that authorities and other responsible persons must work with the various contexts in which the child is embedded, such as the school, leisure activities, centres, foster homes and health. This means that the

³² Vitus, K. & Lidén, H. (2010). "The Status of the Asylum seeking Child in Norway and Denmark: Comparing Discourses, Politics and Practices", in: *Journal of Refugee Studies*, vol 23, No 1, 62-81.

³³ Valenta, M. (2008). *Asylsøkerbarns rett til skole. Kartlegging av skoletilbudet till asylsøkerbarn*. NTNU Samfunnsforskning AS.

³⁴ Eide, E. (2000). *Barn i bevegelse: Om oppvekst og levekår for enslige mindreårige flyktninger*. Høgskolen i Telemark, Porsgrunn.

³⁵ Baker, C. (2006) *Foundations of bilingual education and bilingualism*. Clevedon. Multilingual Matters.

³⁶ Valenta, M. (2008) *Asylsøkerbarns rett til skole. Kartlegging av skoletilbudet till asylsøkerbarn*. NTNU Samfunnsforskning AS.

³⁷ Eide, E. (2000). *Barn i bevegelse: Om oppvekst og levekår for enslige mindreårige flyktninger*. Høgskolen i Telemark, Porsgrunn.

collaboration between various stakeholders – such as the school, reception centres, NGOs, children’s parents, and interpretation services – must be improved.

Gaining social acceptance in the surrounding environment is crucial. The unaccompanied child also needs a spokesperson who is not officially attached to any government authority.³⁸ In any attempt to understand RASC and their perception of life, their situation and individual needs, we must talk to these children and hear what they have to say.³⁹ In their study, Sandbæk and Einarsson⁴⁰ assert that these children missed their friends and being included in society. They were anxious about being in a class separate from their Norwegian peers and had problems participating in various leisure activities due to lack of money or means of transportation. The authors also stress the need to conduct larger studies and include a wider range of RASC, all of whom have their own story to tell. The need to take into account the whole life world of RASC is also discussed by Neumayer et al.⁴¹ They talk about the school as a psychosocial arena, where professionals working with RASC must look at how each child feels about his/her past, present and future.

Lidén, Seeberg and Engebriksen⁴² also stress the importance of using a multicontextual approach, in which structural conditions as well as the child’s situation are considered. The authors have specifically looked at asylum seeking children’s coping strategies in an often difficult and complex life situation. They conclude:

For the children’s well-being in the short and long term, it is necessary to improve the quality of the introduction courses in schools, to include the children in leisure activities, and to give them access to stable social arenas and networks. Parents play a key role in their children’s coping abilities. The children’s well-being cannot be understood independently of the situation for their parents, and the report therefore argues for increased access to work and training for adult asylum seekers.⁴³

5.2. Bip.no – Children and young people’s forum on migration

Bip.no stands for the Children and Young People’s Migration Site (Barnas og ungdommens innvandringsportal). It is organized by The Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi). The directorate can be seen as a competence centre that works for equality in living conditions (for adults as well as for children) and through employment, integration and participation. In working on these issues, IMDi collaborates with immigrant organizations/groups, municipalities, government agencies and the private sector. Furthermore, the directorate provides advice and implements government policy⁴⁴ (see Figure 1, below).

While Bip.no is not solely aimed at RASC, it has been identified as an example of a best practice because it forms part of the overall strategy of the IMDi (see its general aims above), and deals with various issues related to migration, integration and asylum. It is also a site that could easily be transferred to other settings or EU member states. See below for more information about online learning resources. The main target group for this website are children and young adults, but it is also a site for teachers who wish to discuss pupils’ needs with them. The arrival of an asylum-seeking child to a new class raises questions and curiosity among the other pupils, and Bip.no can serve as a starting point for these discussions. The site can also help pupils who wish to write a report about migration or who are curious about an issue after reading about it in the newspaper or watching a TV programme. With this site the IMDi, therefore, aims to:

- provide answers to children and young people’s questions about migration and asylum;
- give pupils a useful tool when they need information about asylum and migration for various educational tasks;
- function as an aid to teachers;
- provide the public with basic information on migration, racism, asylum, refugees, etc.

³⁸ NOU (Norges offentlige utredninger) (2010) *Mangfold og mestring. Flerspråklige barn, unge og voksne i opplæringsystemet*. 2010:7.

³⁹ Eide, E. (2000). *Barn i bevegelse: Om oppvekst og levekår for enslige mindreårige flyktninger*. Høgskolen i Telemark, Porsgrunn.

⁴⁰ Sandbæk, M. & Einarsson, J.H. (2008) *Barn og unge rapporter til FN om rettighetene sine. Vedlegg til Norges fjerde rapport om barnekonvensjonen*. NOVA rapport Nr. 2/ 2008.

⁴¹ Neumayer, S. M., Skreslett, A., Borchgrevink, M. & Gravråmo, S. et al. (2006) *Psykososialt arbeid med flyktningbarn – Introduksjon og fagveileder*. Nasjonalt kunnskapssenter om vold og traumatisk stress.

⁴² Lidén, H. Seeberg, M.L. & Engebriksen, A. (2011) *Medfølgende barn på asylmottak – livssituasjon, mestring og tiltak*. Oslo: ISF.

⁴³ Lidén, H. Seeberg, M.L. & Engebriksen, A. 2011:172.

⁴⁴ www.imdi.no, 15.4.2011.

Figure 1. Homepage of Bip.no (15.4.2011)



The site contains factual information, links to other relevant sites, personal accounts of children who have come to Norway and of their experiences in their new country, as well as stories about their homelands. A dictionary is also provided which explains difficult terminology in a simplified way. The website offers the computer game 'Against all odds' (*Mot alle odds*), where the player can get some insight into what it means to be a refugee. This online game has been developed as an initiative of UNHCR (the UN Refugee Agency) and can be played in various languages such as English, Norwegian, Swedish, Greek and German. The UNHCR also offers educational material for teachers and can be said to exemplify good practice which can be transferred from one context to another. In the teachers' guide it is stated:

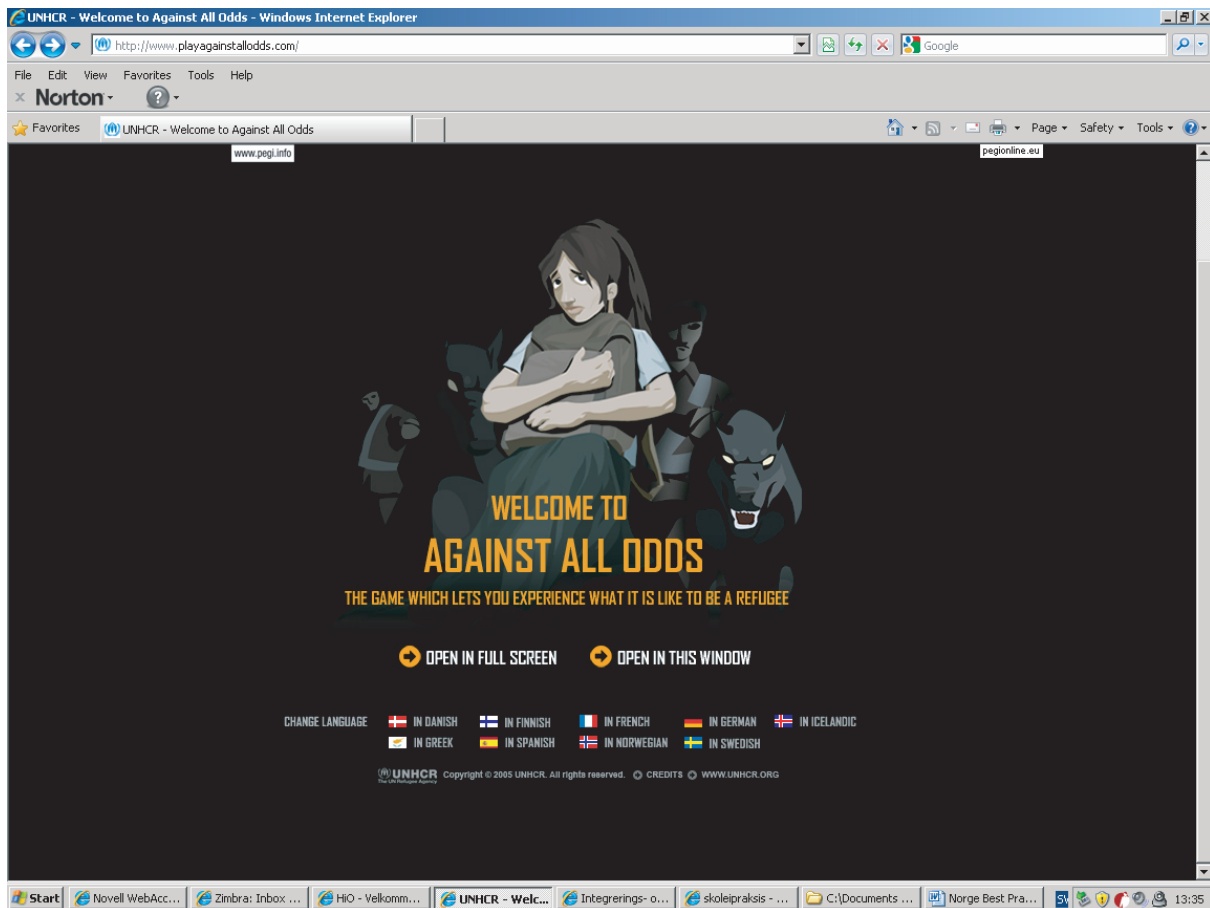
"We hope that 'Against All Odds', an educational and interactive online game, will increase understanding

and knowledge of refugees amongst school pupils. In the game students are given the chance to follow a young person along their journey to flee oppression in their homeland and start a new life in a foreign society. The game is intended to increase students' awareness and knowledge about refugees – where they come from, what situations they have faced and how they adapt to their new lives."⁴⁵ (UNHCR, date unknown, page 1)

Bip.no has a link called 'Asylum and refugees', where the young visitor can get answers to questions such as 'What is asylum?', 'Who can stay in Norway?', 'How many people apply for asylum and how many can stay?' Relevant NGOs that work to help asylum seekers and refugees are also listed.

⁴⁵ <http://www.playagainstallodds.com/teachersupervision/us/index.html>, 21.6.11.

Figure 2. Computer game 'Against all odds' (www.bip.no, 5.4.2011)



5.3. Examples of online learning resources: Tema Morsmål (theme language)

In Norway, one can find several important online learning resources **Mino** (<http://mino.udir.no/id/1.0>), **Skole i praksis** (<http://www.skoleipraksis.no/flerkulturell-opplering/>) and **Tema Morsmål** (<http://www.morsmal.no/>).

Mino is a database for educational material aimed especially at teachers who work with mother tongue education and bilingual teaching for children, young people and adults. The site has been developed by the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (Utdanningsdirektoratet). The Directorate is responsible for the development of primary and secondary education and is the executive agency of the Ministry of Education and Research.⁴⁶

On the site **Skole i praksis**, teachers can find an 'online resource package' that is intended to be a helpful tool for reflecting on and changing one's pedagogical methods in the classroom, with a special focus on bilingual education. For example, anyone interested can access various short documentary films on how schools (e.g. kindergarten, primary and secondary schools) in Arendal, Bergen, Drammen, Fredrikstad, Larvik, Levanger, Lørenskog, Oslo, Stavanger, Trondheim and Tysvær work on a concrete level. These films give the viewer an insight into how various schools and teachers work in an educational setting that involves pupils with a multicultural background. The films have a wide range of themes, such as improving the contact between home and school, but also between various authorities and within the educational system (for example leaving preschool to start primary school).

⁴⁶ www.udir.no, 15.4.2011.

Figure 3. www.morsmal.no in English (15.4.2011)



The third learning resource is **Tema Morsmål** (see Figure 3), which is also interesting as it exemplifies a best practice by providing teaching material adapted to bilingual children and an important database for teachers, who also can publish their own educational material and share it with others. This web resource focuses on language, culture and education. The aim of Morsmål is to serve as a meeting place for teachers, pupils and parents who wish to acquire more knowledge in multiple languages as well as information on mother-tongue education and bilingual teaching. However, the primary target group for the site is language teachers.

Research points to the lack of specific competence in the schools for working with asylum-seeking children,⁴⁷ and these types of online learning resources could be one way of increasing access to necessary educational materials as well as a means to develop a network with other teachers. Thus, the stakeholders (i.e. teachers and

other school staff) can get involved in the initiative and influence its content, the aim being to improve the quality of education. This web resource also makes it possible to publish self-produced teaching material.

The second criterion for identifying this online learning resource as best practice is its transferability from one national setting to another – in this case from Sweden to Norway. On the Swedish website *modersmal.skolverket.se*, one can find learning resources in forty languages. The Norwegian site started in 2009 and is the result of a Nordic cooperation aimed at providing digital learning resources in various languages. The site is run by NAFO – The National Centre for Multicultural Education. NAFO was established in 2004 on the initiative of the Norwegian Government in order to implement its

⁴⁷ See for instance Valenta, M. (2008).

strategic plan entitled 'Equal Education in Practice! Strategy for better learning and greater participation of linguistic minorities in kindergartens, schools and education'.⁴⁸ The structure and content of the site have been developed by language teachers and experts with close ties to the field of practice, and the site also includes suggestions of working methods in various subjects. Thus, this type of site does not run by itself, and resources are needed to make the site work and to fund updates. Morsmal.no⁴⁹ states that: "Theme native sites are constantly under review, revision and development. In Sweden and Norway, there are over one hundred native teachers and school administrators who work with their contents. We try to update the content all the time so that what is contained on the pages is current and correct. If there are incorrect or missing pages, we want feedback from users so that we can constantly publish content that is relevant to your audience".

5.4. Means of evaluating and following up schools' responsibilities

The Swedish National Agency for Education has formulated recommendations for school integration, concerning, for example, education for newcomers.⁵⁰ For further information see the Swedish Country Report. These recommendations have been implemented in Norway by NAFO (The National Centre for Multicultural Education) as an important means to evaluate and follow up the schools' responsibilities to RASC, according to Hanne Haugli at NAFO.⁵¹ With the help of these recommendations, Norwegian schools have been evaluated and a couple of schools are now labelled as good examples because of the quality of their work with RASC.

One of these good examples is Larvik municipality, which has developed systematic routines that are implemented when a child is to be transferred from a reception group to an ordinary daycare centre (see Table 7 below). The systematic routines involve follow-ups to find out the extent to which the newly arrived asylum-seeking child or refugee child's needs are being fulfilled with regard to language (mother tongue and Norwegian), and evaluate whether the newly arrived child is socially included not only in the educational context but also among peers. They also evaluate on a regular basis the routines for reception and introduction

as well as the collaboration between the day care centre and the home. The systematic routines cover three main aspects: 'what' (activity/event), 'responsibilities' (who is in charge of a certain activity/event) and 'when' (time of the activity/event).

5.5. Summer jobs for unaccompanied minors in Vadsø

In the municipality of Vadsø unaccompanied minors, like all other pupils, have eight weeks' holiday during the summer. However, unaccompanied minors applying for asylum are offered a paid summer job for four weeks at different workplaces in Vadsø. The salary is paid by the refugee service (Flyktningtjenesten). This is seen as an example of best practice as these minors are given an opportunity to enter into society, to get to know new people and to gain self-esteem.⁵²

5.6. The project 'Development-promoting talks'

In their overview of the reception of asylum seeking and refugee children in Norway, De Wal Postoor and her colleagues⁵³ mention the project 'Development-promoting talks' (Utviklingsfremmende samtaler). According to the authors, this project is a good example of how strategies have been developed to create a network between medical/psychiatric services, social services and schools with regard to asylum-seeking and refugee children. Several hospitals are involved in the project, which gives about 4,500 pupils in (upper) secondary school the chance to get in touch with a psychologist through the school health service. The project team consists of psychologists, clinical social workers and school nurses, who are present at the schools on a regular basis. The project is judged to be an important means of helping pupils in need of qualified psychosocial

⁴⁸ www.hio.no, 18.4.2011.

⁴⁹ 18.4.2011.

⁵⁰ Skolverket (The Swedish National Agency for Education). (2008). Allmänna råd för utbildning av nyanlända elever. Stockholm: Skolverket.

⁵¹ Mail correspondence 29.4.2011.

⁵² www.hio.no, 28.4.2011.

⁵³ De Wal Postoor, L., Eide, K. & Mekonen, L. (2010) *Reception of asylum seeking and refugee children in the Nordic countries: The Norwegian report*. Norwegian centre for violence and Traumatic stress studies. Centre for child and adolescent mental health. Available at <http://nordicrefugeechildren.se/>

Table 7. Document containing routines to be followed when a child is transferred from a reception group to an ordinary daycare centre. Example from municipality of Larvik (www.hio.no, 11.4.2011)

What:	Responsibilities	When:
Information to parents about present routines when a child is being transferred to an ordinary group.	Pedagogical leader together with an interpreter.	Introduction talks.
To get acquainted; to meet the family with an open and respectful attitude.	All staff at the department.	During the first period in reception group/department.
Dialogue about care, play and learning.	Mother tongue assistants have a special responsibility to use the language in order to create contact and understanding.	
Dialogue with parents	Pedagogical leader and mother tongue assistant	On a regular basis
Observe and evaluate whether the child is ready to be transferred.	The evaluation is made by the pedagogical leader and bilingual assistant. The evaluation tool 'Teach me Norwegian for starting school' is used.	When the child and parents are ready for it and when a good dialogue with parents/guardian is established. A transfer is continuously evaluated.
Talks with parents/guardian.	Pedagogical leader together with an interpreter.	When the daycare centre, together with parents/guardian, have agreed that the child is ready to be transferred.
Visiting the new daycare centre.		Before the transfer meeting.
Transfer meeting; ordinary group/department.	Pedagogical leader, parents/guardian and interpreter.	About 14 days before starting in ordinary group.
Beginning the ordinary group	Mother tongue assistant stays with the child in the new group/class.	The period of getting accustomed to a new place.

help. The aim of the project is to “[...] give young people the opportunity to talk with qualified people in the school health service. A decisive element is that young people on their own initiative get in touch with the school health staff. [...] It aims to reach those young people who usually do not dare or want to seek help when they experience crises in their lives. This low-threshold service also gets in touch with young people encountering more complex problems, and it is important to help them to get appropriate expert help as quickly as possible [...]”.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ De Wal Postoor, L., Eide, K. & Mekonen, L., 2010:25.

5.7. Children's perspectives through media: making one's voice heard

The two projects described below have been chosen because they are both aimed at furthering the emancipation of asylum-seeking children and unaccompanied minors, and at helping them share their thoughts about their experiences of coming to a new country. The projects (initiated by Save the Children Norway) also help the children gain knowledge about film-making and book writing/publishing, which can be put to use in other situations later in life. Furthermore, the media projects did not only involve the asylum

seeking children; the final products have been made available to the public (for example on YouTube), but also shown or given to (for example) politicians. Thus, these projects are about how vulnerable children can be given the opportunity to share their opinions, ideas and thoughts, to be listened to and – last but not not least – to influence their life situation and the society in which they live. This is a method that we find innovative, as much of the work thus far has been from an adult and authoritative perspective (top-down). In addition, it is identified as a best practice because the two projects can be transferred to other settings and/or EU member states.

5.8. With a video camera in hand: filmmaking

Save the Children Norway has been involved in the project ‘Participative video course’ (Deltagende videokurs), which was aimed at unaccompanied minors (both boys and girls). The project aim was to gain insight into these young people’s daily life in Norway, as well as to help them learn something about making their own documentary. Emancipation was a keyword, and making these children’s voices heard was central – children who are often made invisible in society. The goal was not only to help other children relate to unaccompanied minors, but also to increase the general public’s and politicians’ understanding of these minors’ situation and rights in society. The films were presented at an opening night to which people in the municipality were invited; they can now be found on YouTube. The young filmmakers were also interviewed on the NRK television (Norwegian public service) and by national newspapers such as Aftenposten.⁵⁵

According to the people working on the project, the films became an important outlet for the children involved (i.e. a means to express themselves and working through life experiences), as well as for the public in general and other RASC. The project has been evaluated in a report by Save the Children Norway.⁵⁶ The report summarized the film project as follows: “Participative video is a tool for positive social change, it is a tool to strengthen marginalized groups

and it is a process that encourages individuals and the community to take control over their own situation”.⁵⁷

The project had three aims:

- i) The children should express themselves by working creatively with film. They will learn new skills within film and storytelling, which in turn will give them a feeling of being able to accomplish a specific task.
- ii) The children work with their own histories, providing them with a ‘space’ to work through and reflect upon experiences and their own situation.
- iii) The films and the knowledge gained can help to create understanding and break down communicative boundaries between the children and the people working with these children, the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration and politicians.⁵⁸

The two film directors who took part in the course state that “the films give a good and close insight into these young people’s situation and balance nicely between vulnerability and humour” (our translation). Having a video camera in their hands and gaining knowledge of film-making provide a unique opportunity for the unaccompanied minors to express their thoughts and tell their stories. Giving children tools to communicate their own story is stressed, as people generally base their attitudes and knowledge about asylum seekers on what they have seen in the media, where asylum seekers are often portrayed in a negative way. The unaccompanied minors’ films reveal another picture: that these children are just like you and I – human beings rather than a bureaucratic category. The children were proud that they had made their own film; the experience increased their self-esteem and gave them aspirations for a future profession, such as being a film director.

One young filmmaker asserted: “Many people don’t know much about my homeland Eritrea, therefore we chose to make a film about food culture in our country and in Norway”.⁵⁹ For those children who had been in Norway for a longer period, this type of topic was common, together with the differences between the

⁵⁵ Redd Barna (Save the Children Norway) (2010). *Mens vi venter – en hilsen fra barn som søker asyl i Norge*. Oslo: Redd Barna. p. 7.

⁵⁶ Redd Barna (Save the Children Norway) (2010). *Mens vi venter – en hilsen fra barn som søker asyl i Norge*. Oslo: Redd Barna.

⁵⁷ Redd Barna (Save the Children Norway) (2010). *Mens vi venter – en hilsen fra barn som søker asyl i Norge*. Oslo: Redd Barna. p. 1.

⁵⁸ Redd Barna (Save the Children Norway) (2010). *Mens vi venter – en hilsen fra barn som søker asyl i Norge*. Oslo: Redd Barna. p. 5.

⁵⁹ www.reddbarna.no, 08.04.2011.

culture and traditions in Norway and their country of origin. For the participants who had come to Norway recently, the themes covered in their films were about missing friends, family and the trauma of losing friends who moved to another refugee camp.

5.9. “While we are waiting” (*Mens vi venter*): a book made by asylum seeking children

“Now that we are making this book, my heart feels better than before, because I spoke for everybody – not only about myself and my experiences, but about everybody that has lived, are living or will live in Mottak (refugee camp), what they think. I talked generally, not only about myself”.⁶⁰

“So we make a book about our different ideas and experiences, then one boy can be ten boys! – So many different experiences. When we make a book, it will – it must affect people if they read it. Because I’m not only talking about myself, I’m with ten or many more people. And this will affect what other people think!”⁶⁰ (Two boys, fifteen and sixteen years of age, who took part in the book project, from the book ‘*Mens vi venter*’).

During a period of one year, Save the Children Norway visited children living in refugee camps in different parts of the country. These visits resulted in the book **While we are waiting: greetings from children who are seeking asylum in Norway**.⁶¹ The children tell their stories in an honest, brave and insightful way – about dreams and loss, about daily life, about waiting, what they enjoy doing and what things they wish were different. It is the children themselves who decided what should be written in the book, which stories to tell, and they also designed the layout. In addition, it was the children who made decisions about the marketing of the book and selected the important persons, such as politicians and authorities like UDI, who should get a copy of it. In total, thirty five children participated in the book project.⁶²

Some more voices from the book ‘*Mens vi venter*’:

“We need to be in contact with any people! All people! To be able to go to their homes. Especially Norwegians. Because this is their land, not our land – we are not Norwegians. I feel a little bit scared because I don’t know the people here” (sixteen-year-old boy).⁶³

“It takes courage to be a refugee! No one comes here to enjoy themselves. No one comes for a party or for some celebration. Everybody comes for a reason. Everyone comes from desperation. Everyone would like to live where he was born” (fifteen-year-old boy).⁶⁴

“We have to learn everything when we come here. For example, learn how to use a knife and fork! Also the way of reading and writing, we have to learn it in a new way – the other way. We read from right to left in my homeland” (thirteen-year-old girl).⁶⁵

6. AREAS IN NEED OF CHANGE AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

In this final section of the Norwegian country report, the following key areas are highlighted as urgently requiring closer inspection and improvement with regard to RASC and education: access to schooling, collaboration between stakeholders, adapted education in Norwegian, learning outcomes, and teacher education. The section is based on recent research in Norway and on recommendations provided by the research community as well as our own observations from the present review.

6.1. Access to schooling

Although Norway is trying to improve its education system in order to adapt it to increased migration and diversity, there are still problems. A recent official report ‘*Mangfold og mestring*’⁶⁶ (‘Diversity and

⁶⁰ Redd Barna (Save the Children Norway) (2010). *Mens vi venter – en hilsen fra barn som søker asyl i Norge*. Oslo: Redd Barna. p. 52.

⁶¹ Redd Barna (Save the Children Norway) (2010). *Mens vi venter – en hilsen fra barn som søker asyl i Norge*. Oslo: Redd Barna.

⁶² www.reddbarna.no, 8.4.2011.

⁶³ Redd Barna (Save the Children Norway) (2010). *Mens vi venter – en hilsen fra barn som søker asyl i Norge*. Oslo: Redd Barna. p. 74.

⁶⁴ Redd Barna (Save the Children Norway) (2010). *Mens vi venter – en hilsen fra barn som søker asyl i Norge*. Oslo: Redd Barna. p. 76.

⁶⁵ Redd Barna (Save the Children Norway) (2010). *Mens vi venter – en hilsen fra barn som søker asyl i Norge*. Oslo: Redd Barna. p. 74. Our translation.

⁶⁶ NOU (Norges offentlige utredninger) (2010) *Mangfold og mestring. Flerspråklige barn, unge og voksne i opplæringssystemet*. 2010:7.

Coping', our translation), which is a comprehensive analysis of the educational system in Norway, takes the issue seriously and presents a number of policy changes intended to deal specifically with diversity and multilingual education. It also emphasizes the right for children to have access to compulsory school and upper secondary school if they have come to Norway before the age of eighteen years of age.

The situation for unaccompanied minors and other RASC older than sixteen years of age is problematic because they are not obliged to go to school and are often not qualified to enter upper secondary school. Lidén and her colleagues⁶⁷ found that, in some municipalities, asylum seekers aged over sixteen were placed in ordinary upper secondary schools, or in introduction classes. In other municipalities, they were placed in adult education alongside adults. Young people should be in an environment with others of the same age, since this allows them to feel included among peers and participate in various leisure activities.⁶⁸ Thus, young people aged sixteen to eighteen should have the same right to attend school as younger children do;⁶⁹ this recommendation goes hand in hand with the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child.

As a result of the tightening of immigration policy implemented by the government, unaccompanied minors aged sixteen to eighteen sometimes only receive temporary residence permits so that they can be repatriated after they have turned eighteen. This means that different rules are applied to this group than to children/youth with permanent residence permits. Unaccompanied minors with temporary permits are placed in special reception centres. Silje Sønsterudbråten⁷⁰ carried out an evaluation of seventy one unaccompanied minors with temporary residence permits who were offered Norwegian classes in Bergen, as well as a qualification and training programme specifically adapted to this group. The results show that this is a very difficult time for this group of young people. It is difficult for them to stay and wait to be sent back, and they do not find the programme useful. Sønsterudbråten's recommendations are:

- To develop a system that provides educational diplomas within the time available to these youth or consider the possibility of having an option for applying for delayed return if they are already enrolled in an educational structure;
- To develop a teaching programme adapted to illiterate youth;
- To provide more options for training than those existing today, with a focus on programmes that provide tangible and documented competence or skills (such as learning to drive a car or systematic training in vocational fields, such as hairdresser, mechanic or chef);
- To provide systematic training in English with the possibility of obtaining a diploma in addition to the Norwegian training.⁷¹

For younger children enrolled in compulsory school, the situation is better, but often there is a lack of, for instance, mother tongue teachers. In the official report **Mangfold og mestring**,⁷² the authors' advice is that all children coming to Norway before turning eighteen should have the legal right to a compulsory school and upper secondary school education.

6.2. A national educational framework for RASC

Schools and related authorities must be given clearer instructions on the type of education RASC should be offered and the number of hours. One crucial point of departure is to have a holistic perspective on language learning, involving mother tongue education and bilingual teaching. At present, local conditions at the school where the RASC are placed determine the type and quantity of education. One consequence of this situation may be that the rights of RASC are overlooked.⁷³ This need for change does not merely involve clearer instructions, but also a systematic evaluation (including feedback) of the schools' work with RASC.

⁶⁷ Lidén, H, Seeberg, M. L. & Engebrigtsen, A. (2011). *Medfølgende barn på asylmottak – livssituasjon, mestring og tiltak*. Oslo: ISF.

⁶⁸ Eide, K. (2000) *Barn i bevegelse: Om oppvekst og levekår for enslige mindreårige flyktninger*. Høgskolen i Telemark, Porsgrunn.

⁶⁹ Valenta, M. (2008). *Asylsøkerbarns rett til skole. Kartlegging av skoletilbudet till asylsøkerbarn*. NTNU Samfunnsforskning AS.

⁷⁰ Sønsterudbråten, S. (2010). *Veien videre. Evaluering av kvalifiserings- og opplæringsopplegget som tilbys enslige mindreårige med begrensete oppholdstillatelser*. Fafo-rapport 2010:46. Oslo: Fafo.

⁷¹ Sønsterudbråten, S. (2010). *Veien videre. Evaluering av kvalifiserings- og opplæringsopplegget som tilbys enslige mindreårige med begrensete oppholdstillatelser*. Fafo-rapport 2010:46. Oslo: Fafo. P. 11

⁷² NOU (Norges offentlige utredninger) (2010). *Mangfold og mestring. Flerspråklige barn, unge og voksne i opplæringsystemet*. 2010:7.

⁷³ Valenta, M. (2008) *Asylsøkerbarns rett til skole. Kartlegging av skoletilbudet till asylsøkerbarn*. NTNU Samfunnsforskning AS.

6.3. Adapted education in Norwegian

Education in 'Basic Norwegian for linguistic minorities', or 'adapted education', is seen as an intermediate step towards acquiring Norwegian as a primary language and is not regarded as a proper subject in itself. Completing the curriculum for 'Basic Norwegian' is not a core subject that qualifies pupils for further studies. The same policy holds for mother tongue education and bilingual education (bilingual subject teaching). These subjects are seen as support for participating in ordinary education. Our objection is that these policies do not acknowledge the value of multilingual competencies or the mother tongue's role as a language for learning.⁷⁴

6.4. Online learning resources

Although the educational authorities do try to bridge the gap in learning outcomes between Norwegian pupils and pupils with a migrant background, the gap remains. The authorities are aware of these problems and they have, for example, developed a website

called 'Tema morsmål' (Theme mother tongue) in collaboration with colleagues in Sweden (see further information in section 5.3). While it is important to continue improving text books and other materials to help these pupils complete their studies, we also need to develop online resources for teachers and pupils, as many schools lack competent mother tongue teachers or bilingual teachers.⁷⁵

6.5. A multicultural teacher education

In the recent official report 'Mangfold og mestring'⁷⁶ ('Diversity and Coping', our translation), the committee presents a detailed programme for taking teacher education in a more multicultural direction as a whole. For instance, the committee recommends competence in Norwegian as a second language, multilingualism, multicultural pedagogy and multicultural understanding as an obligatory part of teacher training programmes. Thus, a clear policy recommendation on this matter is crucial – one that points out the need for multicultural educational programmes at universities.

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⁷⁴ Also Taguma, Shewbridge, Huttova and Hoffman (2009) emphasize the importance of mother tongue education and of valuing the child's mother tongue.

⁷⁵ Valenta, M. (2008) *Asylsøkerbarns rett til skole. Kartlegging av skoletilbudet till asylsøkerbarn*. NTNU Samfunnsforskning AS.

⁷⁶ Mangfold og mestring. Flerspråklige barn, unge og voksne i opplæringssystemet. 2010:7.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Bip	– Children's and Young People' Migration Site
ECRE	– European Council on Refugees and Exiles
EEA	– European Economic Area
EFTA	– European Free Trade Association
EU	– European Union
IMDi	– The Directorate of Integration and Diversity
Integrace	– Integrating Refugee and Asylum seeking Children in Education
NAFO	– The National Centre for Multicultural Education
NOAS	– The Norwegian Organization for Asylum Seekers
NGO	– Non Governmental Organization
NOU	– Official Norwegian Reports from the Office of the Prime Minister and Ministries
NTNU	– Norwegian University of Science and Technology
OECD	– Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
RASC	– Refugee and asylum seeking children
SSB	– Statistics Norway
Statped	– Norwegian Support System for Special Education
UDI	– The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration
UDIR	– The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training
UN	– United Nations
UNE	– The Immigration Appeals Board
UNHCR	– United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	– The United Nations Children's Fund